

**COLORADO RIVER RECOVERY PROGRAM
FY 2003 ANNUAL PROJECT REPORT**

**RECOVERY PROGRAM
PROJECT NUMBER: 12I**

I. Project Title: Ruedi Reservoir Releases Public Involvement Plan

II. Principal Investigator(s):

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III. Project Summary: Since 1990, Reclamation has released water from Ruedi Reservoir to benefit endangered fish species in the 15-Mile Reach of the Colorado River. Local businesses and residents of Basalt, CO have expressed concern that when these releases to the local Fryingpan River exceed 250 cfs, the Fryingpan's gold-medal fishery is adversely impacted. Basalt's economy is based on the fishery reputation and resulting tourism. However, in managing Ruedi to meet multi-purpose needs of the Fryingpan-Arkansas Project of which Ruedi is a part, Reclamation's Eastern Colorado Area Office (who owns and operates Ruedi) must periodically release flows greater than 250 cfs. To promote understanding of the Colorado River Recovery Program, the Fry-Ark Project, and to help address stakeholder concerns, the ECAO maintains an open and continuous dialogue with local businesses and residents.

IV. Study Schedule: 1995-present

V. Relationship to RIPRAP: Action Plan item 1.A.5

VI. Accomplishment of FY 2003 Tasks and Deliverables, Discussion of Initial Findings and Shortcomings:

Tasks: The ECAO timely disseminated information on related activities, including meetings, through news releases, frequent e-mail notifications, customer request responses, and public notifications. We held our annual public meeting in May to explain Ruedi operations, including releases under the Recovery Program. Upon request, we also provided a public presentation to the Basalt Board of Trustees in September to explain to Town leadership Ruedi operations and releases.

Our main goal in FY03 was to address concerns voiced by the public in relation to the various flow programs for Ruedi releases under the Recovery Program. We did our best to respond to those concerns. In FY 2003 we:

1) Conducted our annual year-in-review presentation at the public meeting: what happened at Ruedi last year (2002) compared to what is happening this year (2003). This was particularly important this year because of the drought conditions last year and the

large amount of snow this spring, which altered Ruedi demands and operations, somewhat.

- 2) Increased e-mail notifications to better communicate frequent operational changes due to drought. Continued to expand e-mail notification list. E-mail notifications sent to public list for all Ruedi releases and operational changes as well as maintenance work.
- 3) Opened the top of Ruedi Dam to the Roaring Fork Conservancy who conducted a series of water education classes for 4th and 5th graders at Basalt Elementary. We contributed Fryingpan-Arkansas Project literature to the water curriculum and worked with our security program to allow the classrooms to visit the dams.
- 3) Once again had staff representatives present at public meetings for all applicable areas of public concern including fish biology, operations planning and contracting.
- 4) Once again held the public meetings as locally as possible (this year in Basalt). We had approximately 25 people attend this year.

Like last year, our second goal for this year was to continue to focus our public involvement on the Year 2012 Agreement to provide 10,825 acre-feet a year of water to benefit the endangered fish. The Agreement is an action in the RIP and the PBO. This year that work included a continuation of the open-to-the-public contract negotiation meetings and close work with the media to explain the operational history of Ruedi Reservoir, particularly its involvement in the Recovery Program. A lengthy article about Ruedi by Scott Condon ran in the *Aspen Times* on January 18, 2003.

Discussion of Initial Findings and Shortcomings:

This year we again combined the annual Coordinated Reservoirs Operations meeting and the annual Ruedi Reservoir Operations meeting. This was especially easy because we did not implement the Coordinated Reservoir Operations program this year. Hosting one meeting rather than two has generated a very positive response from the public and our partners. This way, all questions are answered at the same meeting.

Some of the requests made at past years' public meetings have still not been implemented. We have not:

- 1) Distributed an evaluation at the end of the season (October) to "randomly selected" stakeholders to assess "What Would You Like to see Covered at the Spring Meeting?"
- 2) Distributed evaluation forms post-meeting for comments from "randomly selected" stakeholders for a more thorough assessment of our performance.
- 3) Set-up a 1-800 number for Ruedi updates so information is more readily accessible. This could be handier for the public than e-mail updates. It depends on how many more people have phones than e-mail.

- VII. Recommendations:** The success of the January article indicates we have more opportunity with the local media than we realized. For the next few years, we would like to see more concentration of media relations for more "special feature" stories like the "New Regime for Ruedi" article published in the *Aspen Times*.

VIII. Project Status: On track and ongoing.

IX. FY 2003 Budget Status

- A. Funds Provided: 0
- B. Funds Expended: n/a
- C. Difference: n/a
- D. Percent of the FY 2003 work completed, and projected costs to complete: n/a
- E. Recovery Program funds spent for publication charges: 0

X. Status of Data Submission (Where applicable): n/a

XI. Signed:

Kara Lamb

11/14/03

Kara Lamb
Public Involvement Specialist

Date